

Report cites benefits of high-speed rail

By Bay City News Service

A statewide high-speed train would significantly improve Bay Area transportation, as well as create thousands of jobs in the region, according to a report released Thursday by the Bay Area Council Economic Institute, a partnership of business, labor, government and higher education.

Proposition 1 A on the Nov. 4 ballot proposes a \$9.9 billion bond measure to provide initial funding for the estimated \$45-billion California High-Speed Train System.

The report said the main benefits of the high-speed train system would be the Bay Area's employment, mobility, urban development and environment.

Additionally, the total costs of building the train system are estimated to be less than half of what it would cost to expand highways and airports, according to the report.

"While transportation projects such as highway and airport expansions are being explored statewide for development between now and 2030, they will not be adequate to accommodate California's growth," Bay Area Council Economic Institute President Sean Randolph, who authored the report, said in a prepared statement.

The project can increase employment in the Bay Area by 1 percent, with 48,000 long-term jobs, and would directly generate more than 100,000 jobs during the period of construction, the report stated.

In addition, the high-speed train service can help Bay Area businesses expand their markets within California by providing more efficient access throughout the state, according to the report.

Mr. Randolph cited high-speed rail systems in France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Japan and China as significant features of "advanced, globally competitive economies."

Travel time between San Francisco and San Jose via the high-speed rail would be 30 minutes, and a train ride to Los Angeles would take 2 hours and 38 minutes, easing commutes and reducing pressure on the Bay Area's airports, the report stated.

The report found that a high-speed rail trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles would save 320 pounds of carbon dioxide over the same trip by car.

By the year 2020, the high-speed rail could be expected to reduce carbon dioxide in California by 12 billion pounds, according to the report.